

Michigan Campaign Finance Act

Getting Started as a Candidate Committee

Candidates for a state level office, judicial office or ***local office***, are required to file under Michigan's Campaign Finance Act. (Exceptions: Precinct Delegate and certain school board offices)

1. Determine your filing official:

◦Candidates for a state level or judicial office, file with the Bureau of Elections.

◦**Candidates for a local office, file with the local County Clerk's Office.**

2. All filers must complete and file an original Statement of Organization to register the committee. A committee ID number will be issued and must be used on all committee filings and documents; make sure the committee mailing address and email address are both kept up-to-date so the committee receives all of the communications sent by the filing official. File the original Statement of Organization on time as late fees apply. State filers must file using the electronic Statement of Organization (e-SofO) application. Find out more by reading Appendix B.

Bank Accounts: The committee must have a separate account in a bank, savings and loan or credit union to receive contributions from those other than the candidate. Do not commingle committee funds with any other funds; including the candidate's personal accounts. Filing officials do not issue FEIN numbers as this is the purview of the IRS and/or State Department of Treasury. In addition, filing officials are not able to provide advice on the process of opening an account. Each financial institution has rules and regulations that must be followed. IRS and State Treasury contact information can be found in Appendix Z. Learn more by reading Appendix A.

3. State filers: Read the yearly reminder memo provided by the Bureau of Elections on filing requirements.

4. **Apply for the Reporting Waiver if the committee does not expect to spend or receive in excess of \$1000.00 per election.** The Reporting Waiver does not limit your receipts and expenditures. If the committee exceeds the \$1,000.00 threshold, contact your filing official immediately to determine what campaign statements are owed the by committee.

5. Pick a responsible and detail oriented treasurer; the duties of the Treasurer are substantial and are covered in Appendix A.

6. **Attend Trainings:** The Bureau of Elections will hold a series of instructional webinars for committees that seek guidance in complying with the MCFA and its disclosure obligations. The webinars also provide instruction on the use of the MERTS software.

7. Read the Candidate Committee Manual and Appendices.
8. Learn about contributions and expenditures and what will be required to report for contributors and vendors used during the campaign. Proper and complete record keeping is imperative to filing accurate campaign statements.
9. Know what are statements are required to be filed and the filing deadlines; avoid late filing fees, file on time! Check our website often for upcoming filing deadline. Look for the Yellow Banner.
10. Understand the Electronic Filing requirements for State Level Filers. Go to www.mertsplus.com and the Bureau Website for more information.
11. Review and understand the paper Campaign Statement Forms if the committee is not required to file electronically.
12. Be aware of 48 Hour/Late Contribution Reporting as late filing fees are substantial.
13. Know the Contribution Limits for the committee.
14. Know what contributions are prohibited as listed in Appendix O and Appendix I.
15. Monitor your records online if you file with the Bureau of Elections: Enter your Committee ID to track your activity. If you file with the County Clerk, contact their office for information on the committee records.
16. Don't forget to put Identifiers (ie: Paid for By) statements on the committee publications and advertisements as explained in Appendix J and Appendix S.
17. Bookmark these two web pages and read the material on them carefully: Candidate Information Page and Campaign Finance Disclosure Main Page. Judicial candidates have additional requirements to consider under the Judicial Code of Conduct/Canons.
18. Read the notices and correspondence sent carefully and check your post office, regular mail boxes and email boxes daily – contact the filing official if you have any questions or concerns: contact your **County Clerk's Office at 313-224-5525**
19. Successful candidates may be required to file the Campaign Finance Compliance Affidavit.
20. Dissolve the committee when the campaign is over. If the candidate was not successful, request a Reporting Waiver, continue to file campaign statements or dissolve the committee. Don't let fees accrue; work with the filing official to wrap up the committee.

THIS MANUAL IS AVAILABLE ONLINE WITH HYPERLINKS IN THE TEXT AT:

<http://mertsplus.com/mertsuserguide/index.php?n=MANUALS.CandStarted>